

must quickly take control. We must spray our houses and halls, and set off bombs in the places where they gather. We must dust their offspring to death and buy special soap to, sooner or later, wash them out of our hair.

DICK AND JANE TAKE A HOTEL HOLIDAY

"I must go to the City tomorrow," said Father, "and see a man about some business."

"Oh, please take us along too!" cried Dick and Jane.

"All right," said Father. "We shall ride the Train to the City and then we will stay at a Hotel."

"What is a Hotel?" asked Jane.

Father told her it was a big building with many, many rooms where all sorts of different people slept while they were visiting the City.

"Mother, have you ever been to a Hotel?" asked Dick.

"Yes," said Mother. "Father and I stayed in a Hotel for a few days after we were married. It was our honeymoon, and I don't believe I've had a more enlightening experience since then."

"Who will take care of Spot and Puff?" asked Jane.

"Let them fend for themselves," said Father, suddenly angry. "We are going to the City to stay in a Hotel. In my day, we didn't have pets. We didn't have food to waste. Animals had to fend for themselves."

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Dick is worried. We can see worry lines on his smooth little brow. He does not understand why, ever since they left for the City, Father has been secretly passing money to strange men. First was the Negro with the red cap at the Train Station. Then, when they arrived in the City, Father passed money to another red-capped Negro. The taxi driver got money too. When they stopped at the Hotel and Father thought no one was looking, he gave the taxi driver a handful of coins just as he had the other men.

Who were these men that Father should give them money when Dick himself never had a crying dime? None of the men even said, "Thank you." They only stared at the money as if they too did not understand why Father had given it to them.

The last to receive money was the strange old man who followed them all the way to their rooms to get his share.

"That man is called a bellboy," said Father.

"Is he a bellboy because he answers a bell? asked Dick.

"That is right," said Father.

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In the morning, Jane asked Mother about the people in the room next door. All night long they had been jumping on the bed and making groaning sounds.

"Are people allowed to jump on the beds in a Hotel?" asked Jane.

"Certainly not," said Mother. "But sometimes naughty people come to the Hotel. Tonight we will listen to them together and, perhaps, we will report them to the Manager. I will show you how to put a glass against the wall so that we will be able to hear them more clearly."

"Oh, look!" cried Jane. "See all of the doll soap in our bathroom."

"Yes," said Mother. "In the Hotel, cakes of soap are very small so that each person may have a fresh cake every day. We should not like to find soap in our bathroom that someone else had used, someone with Herpes or Aids, or some other foul disease."

Jane shivered and felt very sad. She was reminded that only last year Baby Sally had somehow gotten Aids and died from it. It had been horrible to watch Baby Sally waste away, and Jane had developed a terrible fear of the word Aids itself. One day, during an assignment at school, the teacher had asked the class if anyone would "like to give Jane a little aid," and she had run screaming from the room. Now, however, Jane had taught herself to change the subject whenever anything made her feel bad. She had watched Mother and learned how to sublimate all her feelings by becoming totally immersed in minute trivia.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she cried. "Look at all the fluffy, white towels. We never have this many towels in our bathroom at home."

"That is right," said Mother. "Having extra towels to use is one of the nice things about staying at the Hotel."

Father yelled from the other room, "Do you know why they

will never find a cure for Aids? Because the scientists can't teach the white mice to butt-fuck!"

"How positively vile!" said Mother.

"Ha-Ha-Ha!" laughed Father. He slammed the door and went downstairs to the Bar.

Dick was chasing around the Lobby and had knocked over a potted plant.

"Behave yourself, Dick," said Father. "Or you will have to go upstairs with Mother and Jane. What in the hell is the matter with you anyway?"

"I am confused and upset," said Dick. "I am trying to learn from this Hotel experience because I know it is what a man must do, but there are many questions in my mind."

"Well, spit 'em out," said Father. "I don't have all day."

"Why did you give money to the bellboy?"

"I gave him a tip for carrying our bags, fifteen cents for each bag. That came to forty-five cents because we had three bags. That's the way you do it. I gave the bellboy fifty cents because it was easier than making change."

"Oh," said Dick. "The bellboy's coat and pants are too big and he looks much too old and strange to be a boy. He needs a shave."

"It is hard to get good help these days," said Father. "Noboby wants to earn an honest dollar anymore. The whole world is going to hell in a hand-basket."

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Dick waited by the revolving door in the Lobby until he saw a man with a little suitcase just Dick's size. Mother and Jane were in their room, and Father was in the Bar. Dick could hear him singing "My Wild Irish Rose."

As the man came through the revolving door, Dick walked briskly up to him and said, "Let me get that, sir." He reached for the man's suitcase just as he had seen the bellboy do.

The man looked somewhat peculiarly at Dick in his short pants and sailor cap, but he handed over his bag and followed Dick to the desk. Then the man gave Dick a dollar bill.

Dick was so excited he wet himself. He went behind a pillar in the Lobby and stared at the dollar. A whole dollar!

Suddenly, the dollar was snatched from his hand by the old bellboy who stuffed a rag in Dick's mouth, lifted him off his feet, and carried him to a smelly room in the Hotel basement.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Dick. He could feel peepee running down his leg into his socks.

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Jane walked very fast up and down the corridors of the Hotel, looking for Mother. Where could Mother be? She had given Jane a whole purse of quarters and sent her to the Game Room. With her very first quarter Jane had won ten free games on "Prince Valiant and the Sex Maidens of Zimbabwe." But when she ran upstairs to tell Mother, Mother was not in the room. Jane could hear the loud sounds again in the room next door. "Darling! Oh, Darling! Oh!" cried a voice that sounded almost like Mother's. Jane put a water glass against the wall. It was Mother's voice, saying "Darling! Darling! Darling!" very fast, and she was jumping up and down on the bed, the very thing Jane herself would have gotten a spanking for.

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Dick lay stark naked on his stomach in the bellboy's room. His little hands and feet were tied to a narrow, iron cot and things had been done to him that he did not have words for. (However, if Dick had an anatomically correct doll, he could easily show us what they were.)

Now the bellboy appeared to be very angry. He cursed and slobbered and waved his arms. "Cut in on my territory will you? You little shit in a sailor suit! I guess I taught you a lesson you won't forget, huh?"

Actually, Dick was trying very hard to forget, but his mind had gone all funny inside his head. The bellboy's room was dirty and trashy. Dick had been shocked to see the bellboy pee on a pile of papers. He wished Mother had been here to see that; then she would appreciate how neat and clean Dick's room always was. He wished Puff was here, too, so she could kill the big rat in the corner. Dear, sweet Puff. Dick felt sorry about the time he had hit her with the shovel.... And then Dick passed out.

When he awoke, he was sitting at the foot of the basement stairs with his little sailor suit on backwards.

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Jane returned to the Game Room and used up all her quarters on the video games. She was winning free games right and left, but she wasn't paying attention. Her little blue eyes had gone blank. There was no doubt that Mother had been jumping on the bed in the next room. There had been someone else in the room too, someone who had said, "I'm coming!" Probably, it was Father. He and Mother had sneaked into the room next door so they could jump on the bed without setting a bad example for Dick and Jane. It was one of those things, Jane decided. When she was bigger, she would go to the Hotel and jump on the bed too.

To calm herself, Jane went downstairs and examined the Hotel's furnishings. She picked up the silverware in the dining room and saw that it was not the best, nor were the china dishes something you would want to write home about, as Mother always said. Mother had taught Jane to notice such things and, at times like these, it was all very comforting. Jane recognized linen when she saw it, and the tablecloths definitely were not linen.

Then she saw Dick sitting in the Lobby.

"Hello, Jane," said Dick. "Have you been having a good time at the Hotel?"

"Yes, I have had many new experiences," said Jane, smiling brightly.

"Me too," said Dick. "You would not believe the exciting new experience I had. When we go back to School, I will have many vivid details to put in my themes."

"That is a good idea, Dick," said Jane. "I'm not sure I want to write down all my vivid details, but I might some of them."

"So there you are!" cried Father and Mother. Father had on his funny face from the Bar, and Mother was smiling serenely. It was not often that Dick and Jane saw Mother smile.

"Check out time!" said Father.

"What does that mean?" asked Dick, fearfully.

Father went to the cashier's window and paid the bill. The cashier rang for the bellboy who took their bags outside. The doorman helped put the bags in the taxi, and Father gave the doorman and bellboy each fifty cents. The bellboy winked at Dick.

"Haven't we all had fun," said Mother.

"You bet," said Father. "We will have to do this again."

Dick and Jane smiled brightly at each other, while their little hearts pounded in panic. They knew they would have many new adventures to look forward to.

Then they all got in the bright yellow taxi. Away went the taxi to the Train Station. Their Hotel holiday was over.

— Joseph Nicholson

Lock Haven PA

HYENA

I don't need much. I eat what the others cannot stomach. I partake only of the fallen. I am patient, I starve, and sitting back on my emaciated haunches, I watch them live their sleek, fat lives. When they die by the claw, the law of their own world, I sniff through the pickings. My poor head never rises above my shoulders. I am misshapen, ugly, a natural cringer. Think of me on my belly, servile, gratefully licking your hand until the clean bones are all that remain. My mourning sounds like laughter.

A MAN'S WIFE

Saul huddled against the baked potato. After being married to Clair for sixteen years he still didn't know if he loved her. Sometimes Saul wondered why he ever married a baked potato at all. She couldn't cook or clean, and no one would hire a potato nowadays. They lived in poverty, shunned by their neighbors, all alone in the world — yet it wouldn't have bothered Saul if only he could be sure that she loved him, and that he loved her in return. Of course he knew that Clair could never tell him she loved him because of her disability, but if only there was some way he could know how she felt. With a sigh he settled deeper in the bed; he thought he felt the potato shift its weight. "The poor dear," he thought, "she must be having bad dreams — forks and sour cream, I bet." He tucked the covers gently around the potato. A quiet smile came to his lips. "Perhaps," he thought, my mission in life is no more than to take care of my Clair." "My little potato," he said dreamily, and snuggled closer, and went to sleep.

— Karen Kipp

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